

WHEELERSBURG LOCAL SCHOOLS

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Board of Education
Matthew J. Miller, President
L. Scott Jolly, Vice President
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Rick Estep

Mark W. Knapp
Superintendent
George Grice
Treasurer

June 2, 2025

Chairman Roemer
Ranking Member Troy
Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

RE: Opposition to House Bill 129 - Impact on Wheelersburg Local School District

Thank you for considering my testimony on House Bill 129.

I am writing as the Treasurer/CFO of Wheelersburg Local School District to express our strong opposition to House Bill 129, which would significantly impact our district's financial stability and operational capabilities. Our rural district serves approximately 1,487 students across 16 square miles in Scioto County, where we thoughtfully manage limited resources to provide excellent educational opportunities.

The proposed legislation would have severe consequences for our district.

The financial impact of this bill would be a revenue loss of approximately \$500,000 annually from our legally executed 2.5 inside millage transfer. From these funds we purchase school buses; and continually update and expand our classroom technology, including teachers' equipment and a one-to-one Chromebook plan for students in the sixth grade and older. This leaves some limited dollars for other carefully planned permanent improvement projects.

Without these funds, in time our students will find themselves trying to learn with obsolete technology; and our buses will return to a time when several had aged beyond the state's willingness to approve them for daily operation. Our Permanent Improvement Fund has enabled us to provide safer student transportation.

At the end of 2027 our Facility Maintenance half-mill will expire and the funds from the 2.5 mills will enable us to continue taking excellent care of our school building, which was built as a state and local partnership. Our building is nearing twenty years old and some of its systems are gradually moving towards replacement levels. Revenue from these 2.5 mills will be critical to keep our building in good order in which students will continue learning in the excellent tradition of Wheelersburg Schools. (Our school district is both high-performing and low cost per student. We are good stewards of state and local money.)

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The District did not raise taxes on its citizens in order to move these 2.5 inside mills from the General Fund to the Permanent Improvement Fund. Instead, we reduced mills on other levies when we converted the 2.5 mills. The process was tax-neutral as we made a good-faith effort to make do with what taxpayers had approved. Also, our part of the state has not experienced exorbitant property tax increases and the elimination of these 2.5 mills' revenue will not eliminate the problem that you seek to address.

On behalf of our school children and the Board of Education, I respectfully urge the committee to:

1. Remove the retroactive provision affecting existing millage transfers.
2. Preserve local school boards' authority to manage inside millage.
3. Consider the unique needs of rural districts in financial planning.
4. Maintain flexibility in permanent improvement funding mechanisms.

Alternatively, you could grandfather existing inside millage transfers and implement any changes prospectively.

As public-school financial stewards, we have demonstrated responsible management of taxpayer resources while maintaining educational excellence. HB 129 would severely impair our ability to maintain our facilities, transportation system, and classroom technology.

I welcome the opportunity to provide additional information or testimony regarding this critical issue. Thank you for your consideration of our district's concerns.

Respectfully,

George Grice Treasurer/CFO
Wheelersburg Local School District
george.grice@wheelersburg.net

cc: Superintendent Mark Knapp

Wheelersburg Local School District Board of Education